

“Multimodal Mountain perceptions of the mountains: how artistic workshops convey the idea of the Alps”

During the late Middle Ages, a fair number of artists moved through the Occidental parts of the Alps. Some of them, such as the Serra family or the Jaquerio workshop, were local; some, however, were not and after formation and employment elsewhere, decide to settle in the Alps settings. This paper intends to illustrate that the images they produced can provide an idea of the perception of the mountain through local production. Exploring iconographic transmission, workshop circulation and practices, and also the embodied experience of the mountain through wall paintings, we will see how three dimensions emerge from those fifteenth-century paintings: first, a symbolic dimension with specific mountain protectors (Saints Bernard of Menthon and Michael); second a material dimension, with the pragmatic dangers (highs, storms, beasts and other mountain dangers) depicted; and then, not the least, a psycho-social dimension, where the mountain issues show cultural specificities. We will try indeed to see how images carry the physical experience, the embodiment of the mountains as a recognition tools for locals to be drawn to religious messages: the uses of local settings to feel the religious stories as "real" and align sacred people with the quotidian aspects of local life (devotional identification and catharsis). The ultimate aim of this paper will be to pin down the vision carried through local artistic workshops (Serra, Jaquerio) of the mountain, confronting it with foreign directed workshop perception and pictorial translation. For example, how Antoine Lonhy depicted mountains in his work, given that he'd been brought up and trained in a flat area (Burgundy) and worked mainly in the south-west of France (Toulouse and Catalogne), where mountains and living conditions and perceptions of it, quite different from the Alpine prospect.

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